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Reindeer school
Students from Archie Stouffer Elementary School celebrated the season last week with their annual holiday show. For more photos, see inside this edition. /ADAM FRISK staff

AH discusses parking problem

THOMAS SMITH
Journalist

The biggest hurdle of driving a car is finding somewhere to park.

In Algonquin Highlands, council is looking towards the future when deciding on parking solutions. To assist with their deliberations, they hired the BA Group, a Toronto-based engineering consultant agency.

On Wednesday, Dec. 10, Stuart Anderson, project manager for the BA Group and Michael Giallonardo, planner facilitated the discussion with council.

Anderson opened the discussion by saying that their company is very experienced with solving transportation issues in bigger cities. However, there are many applicable solutions that can be applied to the smaller communities of Algonquin Highlands.

see PARKING page 13

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A pool for Christmas at Pinestone

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Going into the new year, Pinestone Resort and Conference Centre are making a splash.

While the current pool has been in location for over 35 years, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the heater went in it, causing the heated pool to lose its warming option. During Covid, no one was allowed to use the space as per public protocols, so the issue was not immediately resolved. "Plus there was some wear and tear to the interior," added general manager of Pinestone, Andy MacMillan.

Fast forward to present day, with MacMillan in the GM seat, he thought it was best to prioritize the usage of the pool. He brought in Koho Pools, a company out of Barrie, to tackle the issues that had arisen in the space. "They were excellent to work with," he said. "Just unbelievably good."

Within two months, the company had the pool back up and running. Newly salt-water and squeaky clean with new filters, heaters, and pumps, the pool passed the official certification to be a Class B facility.

A glimpse inside the Pinestone pool - fully heated and filled with saltwater. Currently available for overnight guests at the Pinestone, staff hope to welcome the community in shortly. /EMILY STONEHOUSE staff

But based on the class system designated by the health unit, it cannot be formally offered as a public pool. "Class B pools are what are seen in hotels, condos, and clubs," clarified MacMillan. "It's about the turnover rate. Class A pools are public pools, and it comes down to turnover rates - how many times the 30,000 gallons of water goes through the pool."

So while the pool is ready and available for overnight guests at Pinestone, the option to offer access to the public must follow the criteria based on the health unit. "We did this for the community," said MacMillan. "So we are exploring the possibilities and the options available to open this to our community."

One option MacMillan is looking into is a booking system with memberships. He is also seeking clarification around options for birthday parties and special events, allowing community members to spend the day at Pinestone without needing to stay overnight. "But we want to do everything right," he said. "We are working closely with the health unit on this."

More information will become available on access to the pool in the new year. In the meantime, MacMillan is happy to get one step ahead in creating a destination the community can benefit from. "The response from the community has been incredible," he said, referencing the hundreds of comments and likes they received from announcing the pool on social media. "We're just as excited as they are to welcome them in."

A holly jolly ski day

Sir Sam's Ski and Ride hosted their annual Santa Day, where everyone dressed up in festive gear earned a free day on the slopes. Many rose to the occasion, including, perhaps, the real Santa Claus. /TIM YANO staff photographer

Lengthy Minden meeting keeps budget up for debate

EMILY STONEHOUSE

Editor

During a nearly nine-hour special meeting of council on Dec. 15, Minden Mayor Bob Carter presented the first draft of the municipal budget under the new regulations of strong mayor powers. "In discussions with many other mayors, (we) discovered that there were many different approaches to put a budget together," he said. "Now I was in a bit of a unique situation because I'm on the finance committee at the county, so I was privy to the whole development of the county budget that was taking place parallel to this."

Carter referenced a budget as "a best estimate of the upcoming year," noting that affordability is a large factor to consider in preparing the document.

"The idea is to maintain our healthy reserves, ensure fiscal responsibility, and ensure that we have the services and infrastructure that we need," he said. With those considerations taken into account, Carter shared that it would be a tax increase of 3.95 per cent, "Which is, I think, reasonable," he said. According to Carter's report to council, that increase includes enhanced service levels, a robust capital expenditure program focusing on infrastructure, a new Community Centre in Lochlin, 1.5 per cent put aside for future capital needs, and maintaining healthy reserves to ensure fiscal sustainability.

"We tried to ensure that people who live here can continue to afford to live here," Carter said. "And that's a very large challenge."

The first portion of the Dec. 15 meeting was a public meeting, welcoming the public to have an opportunity to share their thoughts. The next step was to come out of the public meeting, and allow council the opportunity to debate the proposed tax increase.

Senior staff were also given an opportunity to break down the costs within their department, and outline the priorities for the coming year.

After seven hours of budget talk, tensions began to increase amongst council members. While councillor Pam Sayne saw the silver lining of having an asset management plan and a strategic plan in place, others started to falter at the length of the meeting. "We have to look at some of our wins," said Sayne, "I'm very frustrated like other people are too, but at the same time, we have to step back and say we've got some really good wins here."

"It gets to the point where people can't afford to live here or want to live here," said Councillor Tammy McKelvey, "but we can't just keep borrowing money. That's not going to make it livable here."

"The question is, which projects do we not do if we're not going to borrow," countered Mayor Carter. "What is it that we leave out?" he asked, referencing the 25-year investment in Scotch Line, plus additional roads and equipment needed for the municipality to function.

"Frankly, it's 4:30, I'm not the only one tired in this room," said McKelvey. "To try to do a budget in one day: way too much, but if you're going to make it so that we have no choice but to stick with it here tonight … "

> ***"We tried to ensure that people who live here can continue to afford to live here, and that's a very large challenge."***
>
> **-** Minden Mayor Bob Carter

"You don't have to decide on what amendments you're making tonight," clarified Carter.

"Well, I have to decide before the January meeting and I did want to have Christmas in there somewhere," snapped McKelvey.

Carter confirmed that the dates are legislated by strong mayor powers. With the method that it is proposed, Carter was set to present the budget on Dec. 15, with amendments to come in from members of council by Jan 8. Carter then has the option to move forward with the amendments, or veto them as presented.

"We can't get through this all today," said McKelvey. "Or do you want to continue to get through this all today?"

McKelvey was seeking the opportunity to go through each line item and inquire about how the price points would impact the 2027 budget. "And I feel like we're too tired to do it now," she said.

"I'm agreeable," said Councillor Ivan Ingram. "I think we should shut it down. We're not being very productive right now. I think we should stop and pick another date."

McKelvey shared that she does not believe the next budget meeting should be a part of a regular meeting. Clerk Vicki Bull noted that the budget was publicly published on Dec. 10, and from that point, according to protocol, council has 30 days to provide amendments, bringing the last day of amendments to land on Jan. 8.

Bull welcomed amendments to the proposed budget to be directed to the CAO, to be discussed during the next round of deliberations. "I think everyone is worn out and tired," she said. "I don't think we're going to get anywhere today."

Council set an additional budget meeting to take place on Jan. 6 to continue the conversation. There was no formal resolution set for amendments to the proposed budget, but with considerable discussion around items council may consider amending, those proposals may be brought to the special meeting of council set for Jan. 6.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:42 p.m. Future conversations will take place regarding Minden's budget in the new year.

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Songs of the season

Students from Stuart Baker Elementary School, from Kindergarten to Grade 3, graced the stage during their annual Christmas concert on Tuesday, Dec. 16. The show was held in the JDH gymnasium to accommodate the crowd of hundreds who came to see the performances. /EMILY STONEHOUSE staff

Deck the halls

Archie Stouffer Elementary School hosted its annual Winter Concert on Thursday, where students showcased their talents in front of an adoring audience of parents and peers. /ADAM FRISK staff

points of view

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Light in the crowd

THE ROOM feels sticky, with a tactile buzz reverberating through the crowd. You've just kicked your snowy boots off in the hall, tried your best to ply the worn-down Velcro onto your scuffed indoor shoes.

It's a big day. That's what your teachers told you. Behind those doors there are hundreds of people. At your young age of five, it's more than you've ever seen gathered in one place at one time, in your entire life.

Your tummy does a somersault, but you hold your friend's hand. You adjust your reindeer crown and weave your way past the tall people, all blocking your view.

And while there are hundreds of faces looking back at you, there's only one you're looking for. Someone familiar. Someone that feels like home in a world that's spinning.

And suddenly you spot it. Their eyes are locked on you, their face beaming like a light in the crowd. They give you a thumbs up, mouth the words 'it's okay, you got this!' and then you start.

A slightly off-key rendition of *Jingle Bells*, belted to your little heart's desire.

I watched this happen countless times this past week. I see it every year when I photograph the school holiday concerts. The scanning, the surveying, the little eyes looking lost. And then, that moment of clarity. You physically see their bodies change; postures relaxing and eyes shining a little brighter. All because someone showed up for them.

It hurts my heart when kids can't find that light. I wish deeply and terribly that I could offer it to them, but to many, I am just another stranger; a melded face in the crowd that blends and blurs while they seek security.

Showing up. It starts at a young age, looking for that light in the crowd. But it continues as we grow up.

We think we need certain things in life. A new car, a trendy appliance, an updated wardrobe.

But in our little hearts, all we need is that feeling of having someone show up.

And this need translates beyond childhood. As we age, we look for our partners to notice us, our employers to recognize our work, our politicians to represent us on a bigger stage.

We need someone in our corner. We need to scan the crowd and zero in on that face looking back at us. Hearing the words 'it's okay, you've got this' and repeating it over and over again.

Editorial

Emily Stonehouse

When we break it down, we're really quite simple. We spend days, months, years, circling around big ticket items. We listen to people stress about holiday shopping and budgets and skewed politics and controversial news and and and and.

But what if we wiped that all away, this time of year. What if we shoved past the noise, held our friend's hand, and showed up.

Hundreds of locals came out to those school holiday concerts. They took time from their days, they carved a window out to watch an off-key, two minute rendition of *Jingle Bells*. And it was worth more than any money could buy to see those faces light up. The moment they knew someone showed up. Someone is in their corner.

So as we wind down into the holiday season, I hope you feel that euphoria of knowing that someone is there for you. That someone believes in you. That someone out there feels like home when the world is spinning. And if you don't have that, perhaps you can be that for someone else.

Because deep in our little hearts, we all need to see that light in the crowd.

Wuffy the scam

WHEN I was writing my column about AI powered toys a couple of weeks ago, I kept coming across a little brown AI powered plush dog named Wuffy. I first noticed Wuffy in Google's sponsored shopping results alongside other AI powered toys. It was also noticeably cheaper. When I clicked into the Wuffy website, it became very apparent that Wuffy, along with many other so-called "AI powered toys", was a scam.

When you start looking, you can see the internet is littered with scammy retail products. These products can seem, at first glance, legitimate. They might be included in Google's sponsored results, or on popular retail websites such as Amazon and Walmart. You might see them in ads on Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, or Facebook. You might even find influencers peddling reviews about those products. But if you look hard enough, it's not difficult to determine what's real from what's fake.

Humans &

Technology

Erin Kernohan-Berning

When I visited the Wuffy website, the video and images were pretty clearly AI generated – which alone would make me assume that the product itself wasn't real. But also, real businesses with real products like Coca-Cola, Burberry, and McDonald's have dabbled in AI generated ads, so that alone isn't sufficient evidence of a scam. Other aspects of the website were definitely scammy though.

A banner with the logos of well-respected technology publications such as *Wired* and *The Verge* implied some kind of endorsement or media coverage, but there were no links to articles or reviews (anyone can grab a logo off a Google image search). The reviews section of the site boasted 1,443 reviews but only showed eight. Of those reviews, photos of Wuffy looked wildly different from one another, and nothing like the website advertised.

When I looked up reviews of Wuffy, there was a flood of YouTube results with accounts claiming that Wuffy was an amazing product. However, these were also clearly AI generated. When I checked the accounts behind these videos, they were AI-slop accounts – serving up AI generated reviews of other presumably fake products. When looking at the dates on the videos, these accounts have been uploading 10 or more videos daily – all with the same kind of format. Positive Wuffy reviews on YouTube also featured numerous unrelated URLs pointing to the same looking website with minor variations.

This flooding of the internet with fake reviews and multiple websites serves a purpose for scammers. The large volume of fake content is more likely to be picked up by algorithms, meaning the scam rises to the top of search results while reviews calling out the scam are harder to find. Also, as the scam websites are eventually flagged as such, there's a long lineup of identical websites waiting to take their place.

I found a few creators that had ordered a Wuffy and made videos about their experiences. In both cases, the creators (fully suspecting that Wuffy wasn't at all what it was advertised to be) did receive a physical item. However, far from being an AI powered puppy, it was one of those squeaky battery powered toy dogs that have been around since the 1980s.

While there are rules around deceptive advertising, and while companies like Google will take down fraudulent ads, scam ads are still ubiquitous online. There's also the question of what kind of incentives do companies have for combatting scam ads – after all, it's not like the scammer gets a refund after their fraudulent ads are pulled. *Reuters* reported in November that Meta predicted that 10 per cent of its ad revenue - $16 billion – would likely be generated by scam advertisements.

The best thing that you can do as a consumer is to be aware that scammy ads online are a problem. Avoid clicking directly on ads, whether through Google or social media, and instead visit product websites directly. Look up reviews of products from different sources, especially trusted and well-known sources for those types of products. Be aware that generative AI is making scam ads and scam reviews easier to create and watch for anything odd.

If you do fall for a scam ad, you can try reporting it to the Competition Bureau in Canada. If you used a credit card to make a purchase through a misleading ad, make sure you watch for any additional transactions or unauthorized transactions and report those to your bank. Most platforms do allow you to report misleading ads, and though the responsiveness can vary, it's worth doing. It's always better to take some extra time to verify where your money is going and for what. Don't let that online impulse by turn into an expensive disappointment.

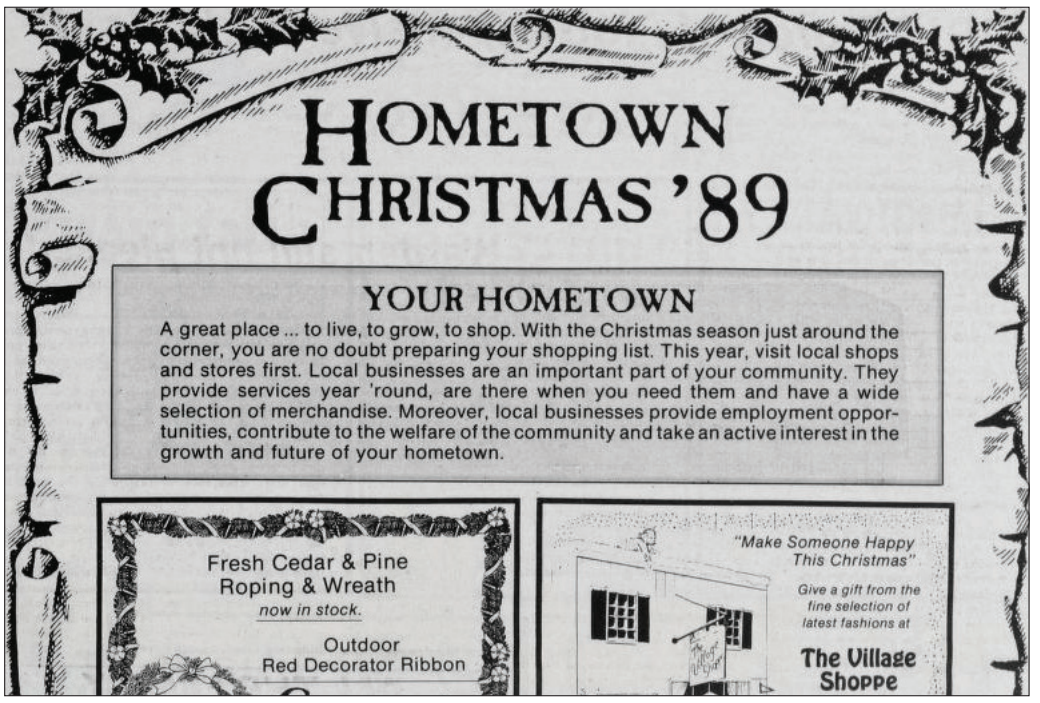
points of view

'Twas the cats before Christmas

Loon Tales

Steve Galea

WE HAD cats before Christmas and all through the house,
not a creature was purring, for lack of a mouse.
Our stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
each of them covered in a coat of cat hair.
We humans were nestled all snug in our beds,
And for once not a feline was perched on our heads.
When out from the living room there arose such a clatter,
I rose out of the bed half-expecting blood spatter.
My wife in her jammies, and I in my briefs,
Expected to encounter some big Grinch-like thieves.
When just past the hallway there sounded a crash,
I knew it would cost me a boatload of cash.
Away to the Christmas tree I flew like a duck,
I yelled lots of words, mostly rhyming with truck.
When what to my wondering eyes should I see,
But a huge, cat-made mess, and a knocked down spruce tree.
I knew in a moment it wasn't Saint Nick,
So I looked at the cats who had pulled off this trick.
More rapid than beagles, the ornaments flew,
There was howling and mayhem for a moment or two.
"Get, Mumbles! Get, Maggie! Oh, Rose you bad pup!
You watched them do this, and you'll watch me clean up."
Just out of reach at the top of the shelves,
Both of our cats seemed quite proud of themselves.
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
And when they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky.
So up to the ceiling our ornaments flew,
All hitting the floor in a second or two.
There was garland destroyed, and a star with one point,
Like a hurricane had blown through the length of the joint.
As I blew my own top and was turning around,
I watched our old tomcat then fall to the ground.
He was wrestling with decorations, with his claws and his feet
And tinsel adorned him from tail to teeth.
And though some was missing we would find it quite soon,
As it came out the back and he howled at the moon.
Though he seemed full of joy, we considered taking him back,
But I couldn't contain him in one little sack.
His eyes, how they twinkled! His claws, oh how scary!
His fangs were like needles! His meow though was merry!
His droll little mouth was chewing up a bow,
And the bottom of his chin was covered in fake snow.
A stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
He got it from the Santa Claus ornament beneath.
The cat had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he howled and his breath was quite smelly.
He was chubby and plump, an evil old rat,
And I cursed when I saw him, that dirty darn cat.
A look in his eye and a twist of his head,
Soon gave me to know we had more things to dread.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And he ripped up the stockings and then turned with a jerk,
And laying a claw to the tip of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the garland he rose.
He sprang to the sleigh, and he let out a howl
And he jumped up and down and I gave him a scowl
But I heard him exclaim, as ran out of sight
"I can ruin a tree, because a cat has the right."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pic *of the* past

A tribute to the community of Haliburton from a Season's Greetings insert used in the *Haliburton County Echo* in 1989. The push at the time was for a local Christmas, and supporting small town businesses wherever possible. Not much has changed! Do you remember this holiday greeting? /FILE

Ice

Our road Down

Sharon Lynch

THE PORCH light caught the side of the small snow bank and Trevor was immediately lost in the past. Maybe it was the angle of white or maybe it was the smoothly shovelled deck beside it but the scene made him think of ice rinks. Like the one his dad made every winter in their backyard. Trevor loved circling around that little patch of slipperiness under the watchful stars.

Skating on the public open-air rink down the street was okay too but not the same as his backyard. He didn't like putting on his skates there, in the brisk northern afternoon, fingers numb and toes almost. Sometimes he had to share the ice with another kid or two but often he had it all to himself. That was the best. If he fell – no one saw. And he fell a fair bit because he was not a natural athlete.

Trevor had been sickly as a baby and young child and although he was fine now, his body had some catching up to do. And some skills would never be as good as his peers. Balance was one of those so his skating was – well he'd never be a hockey player. He also had weak ankles and was self-conscious that other, more accomplished skaters would sneer at his efforts. But he still enjoyed skimming over the frozen surface, pretending he was on his way to the North Pole to visit Santa.

When his dad was transferred and the family moved to the west coast, Trevor missed his Ontario winter. Mild rainy weather was no match for the cold clear shock of air when he stepped outside back home. Indoor rinks were a poor substitute.

But all was forgiven when the family returned east and moved to cottage country. With the lake a stone's throw from the front door, he was in wintertime heaven. The ice surface was a little bumpy in places but the expanse of frozen water called to him whenever he returned home for the holidays. That's probably why he loved Joni Mitchell's song *"I wish I had a river"*. Because there were days he also wished he could skate away, just he and the ice and sky going on forever.

He doesn't skate as much these days. A hectic life never seems to leave time for it. But this winter will be different, he told himself in the fall. Since he wasn't heading south for a winter vacation, he planned on having a lot of ice time. And he just might have company for a change. But that was a good thing. Because Sarah liked to skate as well. Although she had been a competitive skater at one time, she told Trevor now she really enjoyed just lacing up and taking a nice, long trip across the frozen surface. She was the first person he'd met who felt the same way as he did about ice. He took that as a hopeful sign for the future.

Grooming for healthcare

The Haliburton County Snowmobile Association has selected The Minden Urgent Care Clinic as its Charity of the Year for the 2026 season, donating $2 per hour grooming time on the The Rail Trail between Haliburton and Kinmount. This fundraiser uses a trail groomer, with billboard in tow and the community is invited to top up with extra dollars. For six years the HCSA has been assisting local area not for profits with its "Giving Back" campaign. Submitted by HCSA. /ADAM FRISK staff

The Great South Lake Pajama Project brings warmth to communities

Today marks another special day for The Great South Lake Pajama Project, as pajamas are delivered to those in need across our communities. This program would not be possible without the incredible generosity of local residents and supporters. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Pregnancy Care & Family Support Centre for the Haliburton Highlands for serving as a drop-off site and for their continued support. This year, hundreds of pajamas were collected and gifted – multiple times –to eleven organizations, helping bring warmth, comfort, and dignity to those who need it most. A special thank you goes to The Bob Lake Association for their outstanding collection efforts and ongoing commitment to this project. We encourage other lake associations to consider participating next year. Pictured is Ann Stephens from Bob Lake, who stopped by last night with a full bag of donations. For someone in need, receiving a brand-new pair of pajamas can truly be life-changing. Merry Christmas from all of us at The Great South Lake Pajama Project! Contact: The Great South Lake Pajama Project, 1281 Hamilton Rd, Minden, 705-796-8265. /submitted

Drugs seized and charges laid in Minden

The Haliburton Highlands detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) has arrested and charged two individuals following a traffic stop in Minden.

On Saturday, Dec. 6 at approximately 3 p.m., members of the Haliburton Highlands OPP and the Central Region Traffic Incident Management and Enforcement Team of the OPP, were dispatched to an impaired driver call in Minden. Two people were arrested, and a quantity of suspected Controlled Drugs and Substances were located.

As a result of the investigation, a 33 year old of Oshawa, has been charged with:

- Possession of a schedule I substance, 3 counts
- Possession of break in instruments
- Possessing counterfeit money
- Possession of weapon for dangerous purpose
- Failure to comply with probation order

And further, a 34 year old of Oshawa, has been charged with:

- Possession of a schedule I substance 3 counts
- Possession of break in instruments
- Possessing counterfeit money
- Possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose
- Drive while under suspension

Approximately 4.8 grams of suspected fentanyl, 29.6 grams of suspected methamphetamine, 3 grams of suspected cocaine, and over 950 grams of suspected marihuana were seized as a result of the investigation.

Both accused are scheduled to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice in Minden at a later date.

If you have any information that may assist officers or if you were the victim of property crime, please call the OPP at 1-888-310-1122 with reference number E251642098. Should you wish to remain anonymous, you can call the Kawartha/Haliburton Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 or go online at www.khcrimestoppers.com.

Submitted

Minden Memories

A Christmas Greeting Card from Ephraim Sipe to Miss Vera Cryderman, Blairhampton. /Photo courtesy of the Minden Hills Cultural Centre

HALIBURTON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Book of the Week

Most people overlook the three tiny figures perched at the end of a pier in a famous seascape, but aspiring artist Louisa knows they matter - and she's determined to uncover their story. Twenty-five years earlier, a group of troubled teens found solace on a forgotten pier, spending sun-soaked days sharing jokes, secrets, and small rebellions that bound them together. From that unlikely refuge emerged a remarkable painting that now, unexpectedly, ends up in eighteen-year-old Louisa's hands. As she travels cross-country to trace its origins, she grows anxious about the truths waiting at journey's end. Her search becomes a moving testament to the unexpected shapes of healing, friendship, and art.

My Friends by Fredrik Backman is available at the Haliburton County Public Library as a book or Book Club Set. Visit haliburtonlibrary.ca to place a hold or learn more.

Hometown hockey

HHSS Red Hawks are in the win column after defeating Campbellford 3-1 on home ice last week. /ADAM FRISK staff

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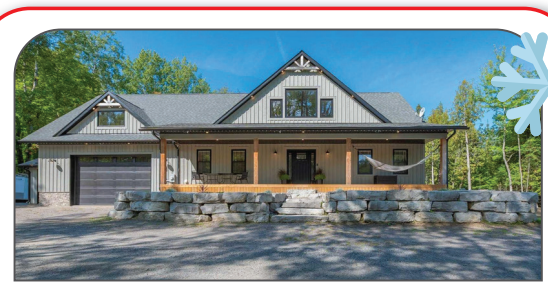
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Volunteers needed for ice races

THOMAS SMITH
Journalist

The Minden ice races draw hundreds out for the snowy sport, and are actively looking for volunteers to support this season. /FILE

With snow thick on the ground already, the Canadian Automobile Sports Club's volunteers are hitting the ground running with plans for this year's ice races in Minden.

If you have walked past the Minden Fairgrounds recently, you can see the ice racing track beginning to take shape. Slowly formed up as the snow builds, the outline of the track is already starting to excite passionate ice racing fans.

The track is plowed and shaped courtesy of the Minden Kin Club.

Once the weather is cold enough, the club will bring the water tanker to the track to create its icy surface.

Six of Ontario's car clubs are patiently waiting for their glittering raceway to form. However, they need your help.

With Minden's ice races happening since the 1970s, the club is expecting the sport to grow more than ever this year. With more racers, more volunteers are needed.

Elaine Willis, a seasoned volunteer with the ice racing division of the CASC-OR, says that her father was the person that encouraged her to try out ice racing.

"I started ice racing in the 80s," said Willis. "I had already started volunteering in motorsports, particularly the timing and scoring."

Her father, a racer of formula cars, said that ice racing would be the perfect gateway event before road racing.

Ever since her first time in an ice racing car, she has been hooked.

When you volunteer with the ice races, you are joining a community of like-minded people who are passionate about racing, said Willis.

Volunteering with the ice races allows you to see the inner workings of the event. You get up close and personal with the cars and are able to meet the drivers. The enthusiasm for the ice races is infectious and you will look forward to each racing weekend.

There are many roles needed for volunteers to fill. Willis says that around 30 volunteers are needed each weekend for the ice races to run smoothly.

Some of the titles for volunteers include clerks, stewards, registration staff, timers, scrutineers, grid marshals, corner marshals, and starters.

To give you an idea of the types of roles available, clerks are in charge of running the entire event, stewards enforce the rules and ensure safety and a fair competition, registration staff take care of licensing, paperwork, and racer entries, timers and scorers track finishing positions and race results, scrutineers inspect cars for safety and regulations, and corner marshals keep the race going by monitoring corners, signalling racers with flags, and communication with the race control.

"Whether you are a student looking for volunteer hours or a retiree looking for a fun winter activity, we have a variety of positions that can suit everyone. You can develop racing knowledge and skills, or put learned skills to use, like teamwork, communication, mechanical skills and event-coordination," said Willis. "Volunteers get to meet new people, support local tourism and contribute to a tradition that has been a staple in Minden for generations."

There is a position for every volunteer, no matter your age; something for everybody to do. No prior racing experience is needed.

"We love bringing new people in and showing them the ropes," said Willis.

If you already love watching the ice races, you will fall deeper in love with the sport by getting involved in letting the sport run smoothly, she said.

No experience with cars in any way is needed, only the interest to help. All training will be provided to you.

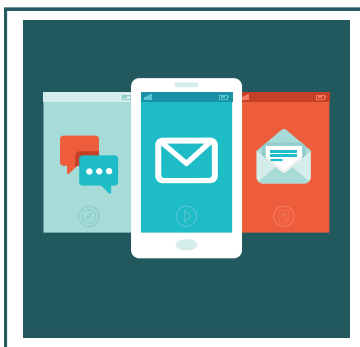
With the ice races being dependent on the weather, the snow and cold is looking very promising this year.

"Last year was perfect for our entire season and I am hopeful this year will be as well," said Willis. "There is always a January thaw, so hopefully it is mild and won't harm the track."

Volunteering with Minden's ice races lets this racing tradition continue forward after five decades of winter fun.

Whether you think you can help out one weekend or the entire season, Minden ice races need your support.

If you are interested in helping with the races, check out their website casc.on.ca/ice-racing. You can also contact the ice racing director at iceracedir@gmail.com to get involved.



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Feeling festive in Algonquin Highlands

The third and final tree-lighting event of the season took place at Dorset Lions Centennial Park on December 12. Alice McKay was the official tree-lighter, and concluded a full season of festivities in Algonquin Highlands. /photos submitted

Firefighters from AHFS Station 80 got their Christmas wishes in with Santa at the tree-lighting celebration in Stanhope on Friday, Nov. 28. Mary Stiver was the official tree-lighter.

Residents gathered to light up the Christmas tree outside the Oxtongue Lake Community Centre on Saturday, Dec. 6.

Algonquin Highlands Staff show off their festive best during a day dedicated to Christmas sweaters. Other festivities at the office included Christmas tree and door-decorating contests, and breakfast with council.

HCSA provides update to trails

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

In the aftermath of the Ontario government's announcement of $4.9 million to snowmobiling clubs, changes may be coming once again to Haliburton County's snowmobiling trails this year.

The Haliburton County Snowmobiling Association (HCSA) made the call to close the former B112 trail amidst the Ontario Federation of Snowmobiling Clubs' calls to close unkept and dead-end trails.

"We could not groom it enough," said HCSA President Neil Vanderstoop. "It's one of my favourite trails."

After the announcement of government funding, HCSA's District has called for the complete restoration of all 268 kilometres of trails lost.

This could include the former B112 trail.

"We are going to see what happens," said Vanderstoop.

The president says that the former B112 trail sees an excess of summer traffic. However, with the HCSA's investment of a bridge along the trail, they do see value in reopening the trail for sledding use.

This year, the HCSA will have some new trails, especially around the Blairhampton area. Additional kilometres of trails will be announced, once the HCSA can finalize an arrangement with both the government and landowners.

In Dysart, sledders now have an optional route alongside the shore of Head Lake through Sam Slick Park to the parking lot across from Hook, Line and Sinker.

In the winter, dozens of sleds can be seen parked in the parking lot. Now, the sledders will have designated parking near the library.

Before the season began, the HCSA was told by their district that one of their groomers would be used by another club this year. The district wanted the HCSA to go down to three, but due to the terrain of the county and number of riders that travel through our trails, they negotiated the use of four groomers.

With enough groomers hired this season, Vanderstoop is confident that their roster of groomers will be up for this year's challenges.

Around 20 groomers will be in charge of Haliburton County's 330 kilometres of twisty and rocky terrain.

One hurdle that has been thrown their way is that they are unable to operate the groomers above -3 Celsius. Each groomer has the technology to record its location, temperature and speed. Groomers are also not allowed to begin until after 4 p.m. unless they have a good reason to begin grooming early.

There are also plans to utilize artificial intelligence to help with creating efficient grooming schedules.

Vanderstoop is confident that even with the new grooming parameters, there should not be any issues with the maintenance of trails.

If you have been downtown Minden, you have likely noticed the lack of a snowmobiling bridge yet. The bridge is managed by the HCSA and the township. While Vanderstoop has been trying to get the bridge installed, he says that the water levels are still too low.

While one contractor has told him that he could install the bridge with his cranes, Vanderstoop is not sure if the bridge will span across the river while the water level is so low.

With trail passes already on sale, Vanderstoop reports that 1,660 riders have identified that they will be riding in the Haliburton County area.

Last Monday, volunteers with the HCSA noted 15 riders were riding along the closed rail trail without snowmobiling passes.

Snowmobiling without a trail pass is illegal and will result in a fine. Paying for a trail pass not only gives you access to the trails, but supports the efforts of keeping the trails in rideable condition.

Haliburton County's trails are unique. Acting like a spider's web, riders can ride to Whitney, from Carnarvon to Minden, across the rail line to Twin Lakes, and everywhere in between.

In the new year, the HCSA will be taking part in the ice races at the Pinestone and at the Family Day event in Algonquin Highlands. This past week's rain and snow may be a benefit to the trails, says Vanderstoop. With the rain compacting the snow and snow following the rain, it will help tighten the base, while having a nice layer of snow for sledding on top.

Unlike previous years, Vanderstoop says that he is going to be on the trails as much as possible this year.

"I only have so much time left," he said.

As the longtime HCSA president, Vanderstoop says that this will be his last season holding the reins.

Fortunately, he says that there has been a huge turnout of young sledders and business owners wanting to get involved with the HCSA. He trusts that the club will be in good hands.

"There are going to be lots of subtle changes this year," said Vanderstoop. "Two things need to happen for snowmobiling to happen. There needs to be volunteers and we have to sell passes."

This year, the HCSA has chosen the Minden Urgent Care Clinic as their Charity of the Year for 2026. Two dollars for every hour of grooming time along the Rail Trail portion of the TOP B103.

Vanderstoop and the entire HCSA would like to thank their supportive landowners and dedicated team of volunteers this year.

If you are interested in supporting snowmobiling, one of Haliburton County's top tourist draws, please visit their website hcsa.ca and fill out a volunteer form.

Parking needs stay top of mind for AH

from page 1

Some parking demands that were discussed included parking for landings and water access only properties, seasonal activities, hospitality and tourism industries, and how to facilitate population growth.

Council expressed their biggest parking concern is with Hawk Lake and Bear Lake.

Deputy Mayor Jennifer Dailloux says that the parking at Bear Lake has minimal parking.

"Parking at Bear Lake Road is really severe," she said. "It is the worst situation we have in my ward."

The parking that is available on the closest road is on an angle, which the council considers a tipping risk. The nearby road that people want to park on is a private road.

Dailloux discussed the rising trend of social media influencers causing unpredictable surges in tourist interest.

Councillor Sabrina Richards shared that if Algonquin Highlands is going to advertise nature trails and cultural places, there needs to be better parking for visitors.

In Algonquin Highlands, there are some 'perfect storm' areas that have culturally interesting areas as well as properties that can only be accessed from the water. The combined demand leads to a lack of parking spaces.

"There has been a tendency to share here's a hidden gem that you should know about. Our township is full of hidden gems, we are one, big, honking hidden gem," said Dailloux.

She said that as more day-trippers come to Algonquin Highlands,the harder it is for the municipality to keep track of parking statistics. Previously, it was easy to get visitor information from accommodations or attraction attendance.

One issue that she noted is that the social faux pas of water access properties has changed. Before, it was common knowledge not to bring over 10 cars for visitors to the same cottage. Instead of having one vehicle filled with the entire family, now it is spread out over multiple vehicles.

"Social contract works, until it doesn't," said Richards. "We need to take control and put in the necessary framework to establish what is appropriate parking and what is not."

"I think a conversation with each lake community would offer a great deal of value," said Dailloux.

She expressed that solutions could be strived to through conversations, advocacy, and negotiations with people such as private road owners and cottage associations.

Councillor Lisa Barry noted that in addition to parking, there are more cyclists on the road than ever before. With cyclists being forced to bike around parked vehicles on the shoulder of roads, it makes cycling on the road more dangerous.

"More and more people are arriving at night. So they are asking not just for parking places, but lit parking places," said Barry.

Dailloux also discussed issues with people parking on municipal roads while camping on Crown land, people storing boats and trailers without permission on municipal property, and space required for contractors to access properties.

Chris Card, parks, recreation, and trail coordinator for Algonquin Highlands says that there is a need for a clear policy in place for people wanting to store boats and trailers.

"It highlights the need for meeting the volume," said Card.

He also said that Oxtongue Lake has a lot of day visitors. With residents and day-trippers searching for parking, there is a need for a parking solution.

> *"More and more people are arriving at night. So they are asking not just for parking places, but lit parking places.*
>
> — Algonquin Highlands Councillor Lisa Barry

Looking ahead for the Dorset Snowball, Card says that there would not be enough parking to support the event with a large number of visitors. Especially if the event were to go viral online.

With 1,000 visitors to the latest event at the Stanhope airport, both Adam Thorn, public works manager for Algonquin Highlands and Liz Danielsen, mayor of Algonquin Highlands agreed in saying that the airport is also in desperate need of additional parking.

Michael Giallonardo, planner for the BA Group requested additional information on short term rental (STR) properties.

Sean O'Callaghan, planner for AH explained that four per cent of the revenue generated from any STRs is taken by the township.

Dailloux says that the money from the STRs will go towards promoting tourism and ensuring the money is used for the services that allow tourists to visit.

Giallonardo asked about how the Dorset Tower affects the parking in Algonquin Highlands.

Danielsen says that Lake of Bays and AH have a service agreement in Dorset and that parking could be something that both municipalities tackle together.

"It is very much a community," said Dailloux. "There is no division."

"There are even different speed signs on opposite sides of the road," said Danielsen.

Richards questioned charging people to park for an hour to have a picnic, versus canoeists that park for over a week. Danielsen says that the only patrollable parking situation would be if AH built a parking lot themselves and enforced payments.

Councillor Julia Shortreed says that her cottage in Georgian Bay has a gated lot that only property owners can use. Their cottage association purchased the lot in collaboration with the local municipality.

The property owners pay a fee for the next twenty years to pay back the township.

"It runs smoothly. There are easily 30, 40, 50 cars that park there," said Shortreed.

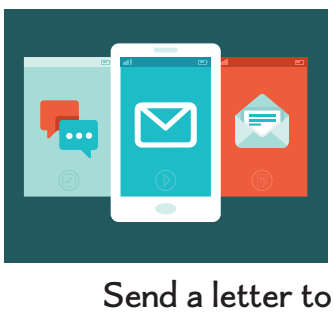
Council discussed that their priorities included securing space to ensure enough parking, fairness across the board for all taxpayers, and access for emergency services.

Out of all geographic locations in the municipality, Hawk Lake is in the most urgent need of a parking solution.

To pay for parking, QR codes were considered, but there are still problems with not everyone having a cell phone or internet. Card says that one good solution is to have a contracting company to check parking, so that a staff member does not have to be paid all year.

After the engagement session, the BA Group said that they will be presenting their findings on Jan. 29 and offering their suggestions for best practices. After council's feedback, the final recommendations will be presented on March 5.

More to follow as the parking story develops.



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PUBLIC NOTICE
Applicant(s): Enright
Lot 4, Concession 2, Kushog Lake
Geographic Township of Stanhope

WHEREAS the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Algonquin Highlands has declared part of the original shore road allowance in front of Lot 4, Concession 2, Kushog Lake, in the geographic Township of Stanhope, in the Township of Algonquin Highlands, County of Haliburton, to be surplus.

TAKE NOTICE that the Council of the Municipal Corporation of the Township of Algonquin Highlands proposes to enact a By-Law to stop-up, close and convey to the abutting property owner(s) that part of the original shore road allowance in front of Lot 4, Concession 2, described as all and singular that certain parcel or tract of land and premises situate, lying and being in the Geographic Township of Stanhope, in the County of Haliburton and being composed of the following:

FIRSTLY: THAT part of the original shore road allowance lying in front of Lot 4, Concession 2, described as Part 1 on a Plan deposited in the Registry Office for the Registry Division of Haliburton County as Plan 19R-11142.

The proposed By-Law will come before the said Council for consideration at its regular meeting at the Algonquin Highlands Municipal Office, 1123 North Shore Road, on the **15th day of January, 2026** and at that time, the Council will hear in person or by his/her counsel, solicitor or agent any person who claims that his/her land will be prejudicially affected and who applies to be heard. Any person who wishes to be heard by Council regarding this proposed closure must contact the Clerk to schedule a delegation with Council.

Dated: December 23, 2025

Sean O'Callaghan
Planner
Township of Algonquin Highlands
1123 North Shore Rd.
Algonquin Highlands, ON K0M 1S0
Tel: (705) 489-2379
Email: socallaghan@algonquinhighlands.ca

PUBLIC NOTICE
Applicant(s): Waller
Lot 15, Concession 7, Halls Lake
Geographic Township of Stanhope

WHEREAS the Council of the Corporation of the Township of Algonquin Highlands has declared part of Lot 15, Concession 7, and part of the original shore road allowance lying in front of Lot 15, Concession 7, in the geographic Township of Stanhope, in the Township of Algonquin Highlands, County of Haliburton, to be surplus.

TAKE NOTICE that the Council of the Municipal Corporation of the Township of Algonquin Highlands proposes to enact a By-Law to stop-up, close and convey to the abutting property owner(s) that part of Lot 15, Concession 7 and part of the original shore road allowance lying in front of Lot 15, Concession 7, described as all and singular that certain parcel or tract of land and premises situate, lying and being in the Geographic Township of Stanhope, in the County of Haliburton and being composed of the following:

FIRSTLY: THAT part of Lot 15, Concession 7, described as Part 1 on a Plan deposited in the Registry Office for the Land Titles Division of Haliburton County as Plan 19R-11177.

SECONDLY: THAT part of the original shore road allowance lying in front of Lot 15, Concession 7, described as Part 2 on a Plan deposited in the Registry Office for the Land Titles Division of Haliburton County as Plan 19R-11177.

The proposed By-Law will come before the said Council for consideration at its regular meeting at the Algonquin Highlands Municipal Office, 1123 North Shore Road, on the **15th day of January, 2026** and at that time, the Council will hear in person or by his/her counsel, solicitor or agent any person who claims that his/her land will be prejudicially affected and who applies to be heard. Any person who wishes to be heard by Council regarding this proposed closure must contact the Clerk to schedule a delegation with Council.

Dated: December 23, 2025

Sean O'Callaghan
Planner
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Winter song brings community together

EMILY STONEHOUSE
Editor

Laurie Sweig, Bill Black, and Bill Gliddon pause for a picture during a recording session for the Haliburton Highlands Harmony Project. /submitted

There are songs of the season, and as we settle into a winter slumber, the Haliburton Highlands Harmony Project is ready to share theirs.

As of Dec. 21, winter solstice, the yearlong project has launched their final installation of their four seasons. The winter song, titled *Some Love It, Some Don't,* captures the feelings and emotions of a Haliburton Highlands winter, as told by longtime locals and newcomers alike.

"Creating a song can be so exciting," said Laurie Sweig, the project coordinator, "It can be frustrating too, but the whole thing is so exciting."

The lightbulb moment for the Haliburton Highlands Harmony Project came to Sweig naturally, after she settled into the community six years ago. "Life is so serendipitous," she reflected, noting that she began volunteering with the Canoe FM recording studio three years ago. "I love the area. Love it here, and love songwriting, and I wanted to see more people come through the doors to record at Canoe. Many people don't understand what we have here."

Sweig said that the idea to incorporate the many singers, songwriters, and musicians together through one project came organically. She had just started taking violin lessons from instructor Bethany Houghton, and brought the idea to her first. "I told her what I wanted to do and she connected me with others," said Sweig. "Then I just thought, 'I'm going to do this and see what happens.'"

Four songs happened. Each different, each unique, each telling a story about life in Haliburton County. They are songs listeners can relate to, stories that deserve to be told. As is the experience with most music, it connects a community; each feeling tethered to the soul of the song.

With over 55 people involved in the initiative, it took off. Many of the artists had not worked with other artists before.

see CANOE page 17

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Canoe FM offers recording space

from page 16

Some are longtime residents of the community who have dabbled in music their whole lives, others are brand new but carry a fiery passion for the arts in their hearts.

"My goal was to make sure that they're all really proud of this project," said Sweig, noting the recent launch of the winter song, complimenting the three seasons released prior. "They donated their time and their talent to this."

Roxanne Casey, the manager of Canoe FM, was thrilled with the project. "Canoe FM was very pleased to be a part of the Harmony Project, a collaboration that brought together community voices around four original songs, written in most parts by Laurie," she said. "It was wonderful to see so many musicians come and go through the station, contributing their talents and enthusiasm to a project that was so positively received."

Casey noted that the Harmony Project is just one of many musical initiatives created in the local radio station's studio. Canoe provided the recording space, equipment, and on-air support by sharing the finished songs with their listeners. Casey encourages those interested in using the recording space to reach out to thestudio@canoefm.com.

While the four songs of the seasons are completed, this isn't the end of the line for sound engineer Sweig. "That's not in my nature," she laughed. "I love a project like this. Something that starts and something that ends. And the Haliburton Highlands Harmony Project is such an umbrella. It can bring people together."

The four songs can be heard and downloaded for free via Bandcamp, and can be listened to seasonally on Canoe FM. For those looking to get in touch with Sweig for future projects, you can contact Haliburton3Hproject@gmail.com or visit their Facebook page, Haliburton Highlands Harmony Project.

The following musicians and singers are featured in the four songs:

Haliburton Highlands Harmony Project (3H Project) - Spring Song

The Days Are Getting Longer

Artists

Vocals: Bethany Houghton, George Porter, Dave Bathe, Jeska Houghton and Laurie Sweig
Bass: Ian Pay
Piano: Gary Baumgartner
Guitar: Steve Main
Fiddle: Bethany Houghton and Jeska Houghton
Banjo: Bill Hutson
Mandolin: Brian Sachs
Music Composer: Laurie Sweig
Lyric Writer: Laurie Sweig

Haliburton Highlands Harmony Project (3H Project) - Summer Song

Haliburton Summer Days

Artists

Lead Vocals: Gary Baumgartner, Rita Jackson
BG Vocals: Greg Roe, Bazza Hayward, Kim Quigley, Laurel McCauley, Nancy Keyser, Marit Lapierre, Wendy Ladurantaye and Kim Kelly
Bridge Vocals: Elizabeth Oakley, Cathy McIlmurray, Norma Bingham, Doug Roupay, Lena Fontaine, Scott Duggan, Chris Coneybear, John Jackson, Roxanne Casey and Laurie Sweig

The background vocals for the Summer Song. /submitted

Whistling: Bethany Houghton
Drums: Joe Truss and Bazza Hayward
Bass: Robert Van Nood
Acoustic Guitar: Greg Roe
Electric Guitar: Andy Salvatori
Shaker: Lesley English
Music Composer: Laurie Sweig
Lyric Writer: Laurie Sweig

Haliburton Highlands Harmony Project (3H Project) - Fall Song

My Haliburton Highlands Rhapsody

Artists

Lead Vocals: Jocelyn Regina, Jodi Timgren, Bill Black and Jim Love
BG Vocals: Jocelyn Regina, Victoria Bingham, George Porter, Diane Burchert, Thomas Austin-Ward and Rowyn Foster
Electric Bass: Kelsey Redman
Piano: Bill Gliddon
Acoustic Guitar: Kelly Outram
Upright Bass: Kelsey Redman
Cello: Bethany Houghton
Viola: Bethany Houghton
Violins: Jeska Houghton and Keri Kaufman
Trumpet: Lorrie Reddering
Music Composer: Laurie Sweig and Bethany Houghton
Lyric Writer: Laurie Sweig

Haliburton Highlands Harmony Project - Winter Song

Some Love It, Some Don't

Artists

Lead Vocals: Jeff Moulton, Lizzy Clarke and Dougie Walker
BG Vocals: Lizzy Clarke, Dougie Walker and Kate Hall
Electric Bass: Peter Miller
Piano: Shawn Chamberlin
Acoustic Guitar: Bill Candy
Electric Guitars: Bill Candy
Fiddle: Shannon Neville
Harmonicas: Rich Anton and Steve Mykolyn
Winter Banter: Back-Line Boys
Music Composer: Laurie Sweig and Rich Anton
Lyric Writer: Laurie Sweig and Rich Anton

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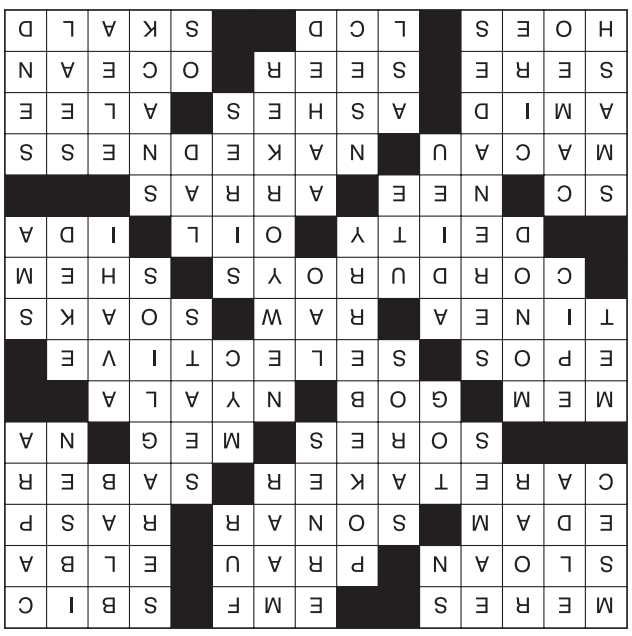

SUDOKU SOLUTION

9	3	4	6	5	2	1	7	8
2	1	8	3	7	4	6	5	9
6	7	5	9	8	1	3	4	2
7	9	2	1	4	8	5	6	3
1	5	3	2	6	9	7	8	4
4	8	6	7	3	5	2	9	1
3	4	9	5	2	7	8	1	6
5	2	1	8	9	6	4	3	7
8	6	7	4	1	3	9	2	5

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	3				2		7	
			3		4	6	5	
			9	8			4	
7				4			6	
		3					8	
					5	2		1
				2	7	8		
5		1		9				7
	6					9		

Level: Intermediate

Fun By The Numbers

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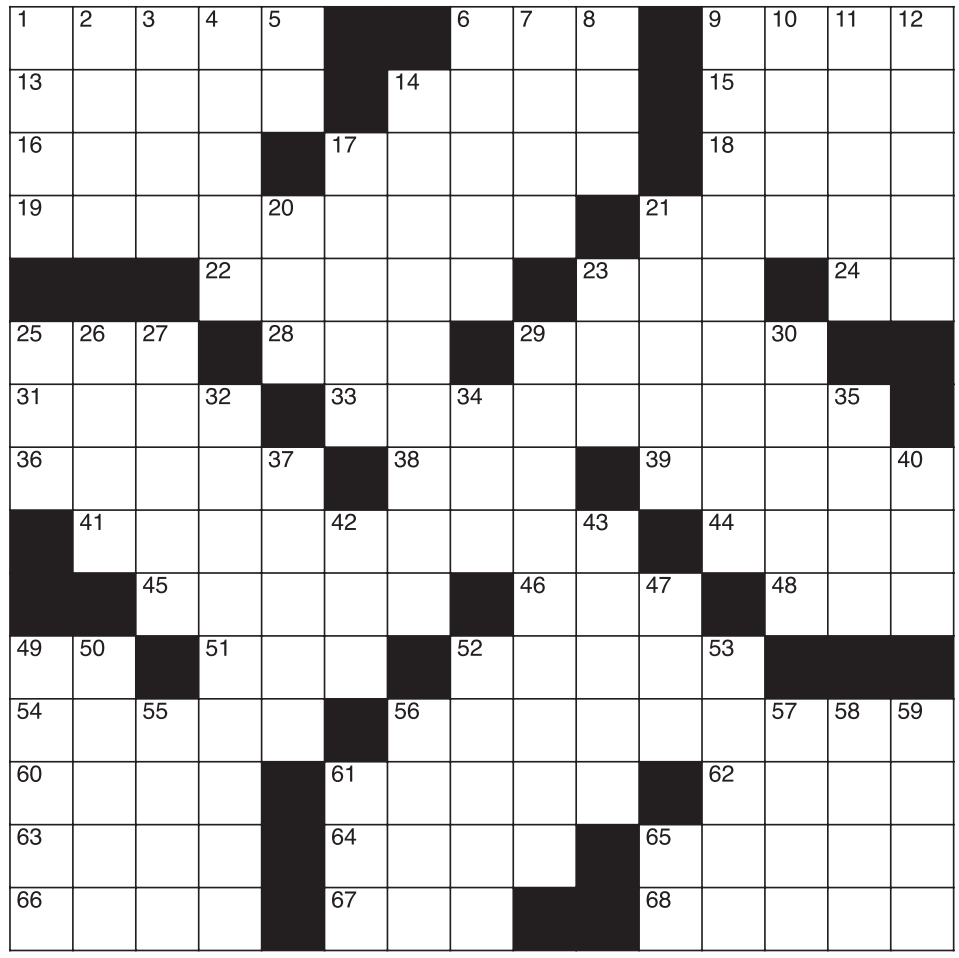
Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Answers on page 17



CLUES ACROSS
1. Lakes
6. Electromotive force
9. Invests in little enterprises
13. Longtime Utah Jazz coach
14. Small sailboat
15. Actor Idris
16. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
17. System that detects objects under water
18. Harsh, grating noise
19. Steward
21. A fencing sword
22. Infections
23. Actress Ryan
24. Sodium
25. Swedish castle
28. A lump of slime
29. African antelope
31. Insurance providers
33. Choosy
36. Ringworm
38. Unpolished
39. Drenches
41. Pant style
44. Son of Noah
45. Spiritual being
46. Upton Sinclair novel
48. Journalist Tarbell
49. Popular sports highlight show
51. Born of
52. Rich tapestry
54. S. China seaport
56. State of being unclothed
60. Surrounded by
61. Residue
62. Away from wind
63. Dried-up
64. Visionary
65. A very large body of water
66. Garden tools
67. Screen type
68. Ancient Scandinavian poet

CLUES DOWN
1. Millisecond
2. Spanish city
3. A sudden very loud sound
4. "The Indiana Jones of beer"
5. Tin
6. Sea eagles
7. Volcanic crater
8. Type of coat
9. Women's apartments in Ottoman palace
10. Divulge a secret
11. Norwegian playwright
12. "It's a Wonderful Life" director
14. Poisonous perennial plant
17. 18-year astronomical period
20. Clothes
21. Places to sit
23. Family of regulator genes
25. New York ballplayer
26. Impressive in size or scope
27. Jacques __, French biologist
29. One from the Big Apple
30. Genus of woolly lemurs
32. Songs to one's beloved
34. Indigenous person of N.E. Thailand
35. Supplemented with difficulty
37. Farewell
40. Investment account (abbr.)
42. One from Utah
43. Begets
47. A male child
49. Break apart
50. Brief appearance
52. Partner to "oohed"
53. A light informal meal
55. Fabric with smooth, shiny surface
56. One billionth of a second
57. Ancient Italian-Greek colony
58. Close tightly
59. Mail out
61. Language
65. Computer characteristic

Answers on page 17

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Please forward your resume to shume@haliburtoncounty.ca no later than January 2, 2026, at 4:30pm.

We thank all who apply for this position; however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

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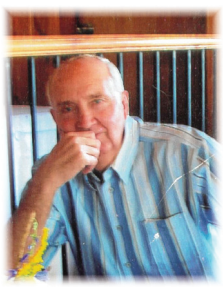

In Loving Memory of

Verne Gartshore

Passed away peacefully at Hyland Crest Senior Citizens Home on Monday, December 15, 2025 at the age of 86.

Beloved husband and soulmate to Marlin for 62 years. Brother-in-law to Lois Barry (Junior – predeceased), Karl Upton (Terri), Bernice Cooper-Johnson (Keith), Roger Cooper (Tammy) and predeceased by Morgan Upton (Pat), Murray Upton (Barb), Bernard Upton, Allan Upton (Beverly) and Linda Hamilton (Jim). Brother to Don (deceased – 1978), Craig (Margaret), Gary (Pat), and fondly remembered by many nieces, nephews, family and friends.

Verne spent 50 years working at Vasey Insurance, he had a love for horses and cared for many.

Friends are invited to visit the family at the Gordon A. Monk Funeral Home, 127 Bobcaygeon Rd., P.O. Box 427, Minden, Ontario K0M 2K0 on Friday, December 19, 2025 from 2:00 pm until 5:00 pm and on Saturday, December 20, 2025 from 11:00 am until the time of the Funeral Service in the chapel at 12:00 o'clock noon. Reception to follow in the Monk-Cray Family Centre at the Funeral Home. Spring Interment at Maple Lake Cemetery, Maple Lake Ontario.

Memorial Donations to the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation (HHHSF) would be appreciated by the family.

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In Loving Memory of

Audrey Alma Hewitt

It is with deep sadness our family announces the passing of Audrey Alma Hewitt. She died peacefully in her sleep on December 13, 2025 in her 91st year. Born August 31, 1935, she is survived by her husband Jack to whom she was married for an extraordinary 68 years. She also leaves her son Jack (Julie), son Paul (Kari) and daughter Sandra (Keith). Audrey was incredibly proud of her exceptional grandchildren; Ashlee (Brad), Sara, Adam (Melissa), Christopher (Margaret), Matthew (Danica), Laura, Jeffrey (Kate) and Kyle. She also had six wonderful great-grandchildren; Charlotte, Finn, Paisley, Callie, Greyson and Hailey. She was predeceased by grandchildren Scott (1990), Jennifer (1991) and Tyler (2021). Audrey spent many happy years with Jack at their home in Eagle Lake. They enjoyed many international trips throughout the world with friends from the Haliburton Highlands, and both played an important role in bringing Canoe FM radio to that area. Audrey was an avid gardener, curler, boater but most important she was quite simply a lovely, lovely lady. It was a privilege to call her wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Canadian Kidney Foundation in Audrey's name. Special thanks to the kidney dialysis team at Mackenzie Health (Dr. Nicola Matthews, R.N. Megan Polera and P.D. nurse Lejo), and the staff at Sharon Corners Retirement Residence for their warmth and kindness.
A private family funeral will held.

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In Loving Memory of

James David "Jim" Pennycook

Passed away peacefully at home on Thursday, December 18, 2025, at the age of 80.

Beloved husband to Marilyn. Dear father to Christine and her husband Alex Little. Loving Appa to Erin (Ben Davis), Jamie, Alex and great Appa to Sophie. Dear brother of Joan (Lance Hodgins), uncle to Catherine (Sean), Jenni (Max), great uncle to Cooper, Thomas and cousin to Carole Easton.

It was Jim's wish for cremation and Private Family arrangements.

In lieu of Donations, it was Jim's wish that you would consider Organ Donation through the Trillium Gift of Life Organ Donations.

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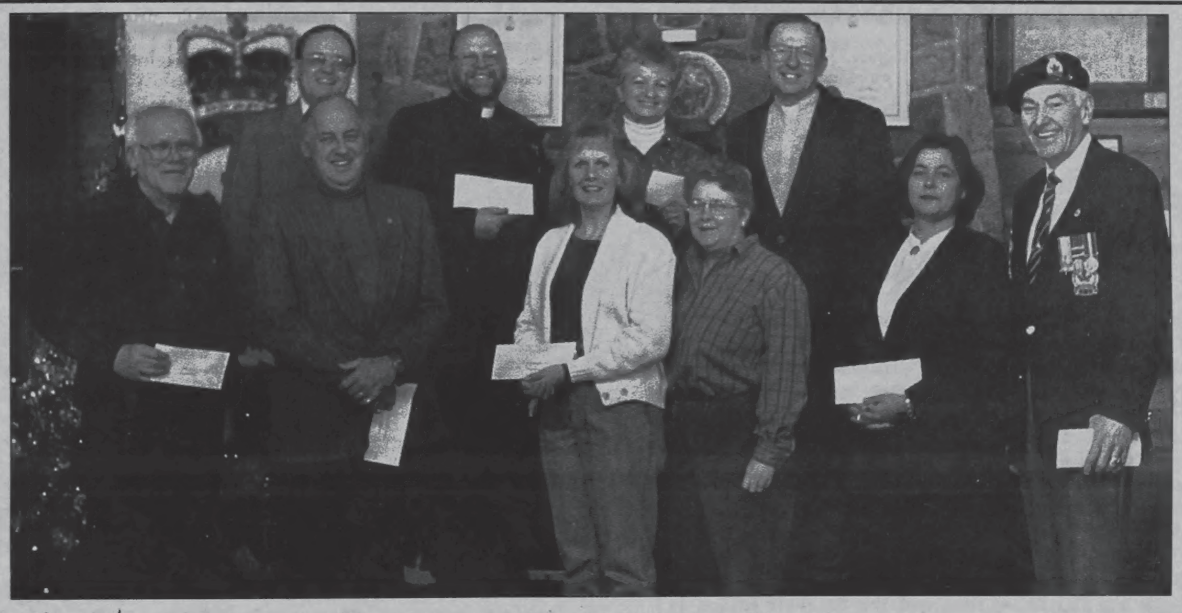
IN THE SPIRIT OF GIVING: Christmas came a wee bit early this year for some of the area's churches and non-profit organizations. It came in the form of some very generous donations from the Minden branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 636. President Maurice Winterflood, right, distributed cheques to the various groups on December 16. Seen here are: (front row from left) Jerry Rome for the Haliburton County Rescue Sleigh Group which received $500; Mike Maher for Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church which received $1,000; Louise Leonard for the CSSM Christmas Box Campaign, $1,000, Barbara Walford-Davis for the Minden Food Bank, $500, Dianne Loucks for CHACE Inc., $1,000. Back row, from left, the Minden Bible Church was represented by Pastor Terry Wicks, $1,000; St. Paul's Anglican Church, represented by Rev. Brian Parker , $1,000; Mary Hicks also from the Minden Food Bank; and the Minden United Church, represented by Rev. Peter Walford-Davis, $1,000. The money was raised by the Legion through various lotteries and projects.



Warden selected Tuesday evening

Three in a row for Fearrey

by Jerry Grozelle

Murray Fearrey has been elected Warden of Haliburton County for the third consecutive term. Fearrey was nominated by Jeanne Anthon, who noted that Fearrey had agreed to shoulder the burden on behalf of the county. Anthon expressed her confidence in Fearrey to lead the county into a year of unprecedented change. She said Fearrey has maintained a measure of humour over the past term of office, which has been appreciated.

Anthon noted that Fearrey first served as Warden in 1974. He is only the second person in county history to serve six terms as Warden and the second to have served three consecutive terms.

"He has added another element to our history," Anthon said.

"That doesn't mean I'm ever going to do this again," Fearrey retorted; to which, Anthon quipped, "You have to, until you get it right."

Elva Bates seconded the nomination.

There were no other nominations for the position of Warden.

Fearrey thanked the members of County Council for their vote of confidence.

"I think this year is going to be an exceptionally busy year for us," Fearrey said.

Among the evening's guests was MP John O'Reilly, who offered his congratulations to Fearrey.

"On behalf of the government of Canada, we wish you well and thank you for taking an interest in your community," O'Reilly said. "It's a very trying time in our history, with the downloading. There are a lot of changes coming and as your federal representative I can offer support."

Warden's comments

"Life and change comes to us like a bullet these days, fast and unforgiving," Fearrey said. "County politicians and local politicians are no exception. The pressing challenge is change to get better, quicker. That applies to every walk of life and every profession.

"In these times, there are always amazing possibilities for people who rise to the occasion. In this term, on behalf of the people who put us here, that's what our council must do... rise to the occasion. I must rise to the occasion with you. The Warden can only lead. What we do, and what we accomplish, we will do together.

Fearrey asked the councillors which they thought was more important, the present, or the future.

"Obviously, it's the future, and that's what we must decide in the present," he stated. "As we face the challenges ahead, the real challenge for county council this year, probably more so than ever, will surface early in the year when we discuss the assessment, especially on commercial properties. There will be a lot of options for us. Some options will benefit some municipalities and will be detrimental to others."

Fearrey said it will be difficult, at times, for council members to think of the well-being of the county ahead of their own municipalities.

"I urge you to think about wearing your county hats, because what benefits you today, may not benefit you tomorrow. There are a variety of things happening and you must think about what's good for this county and the citizens of this county and not always what is isolated in your own community."

He gave the example of policing costs, noting that there may be some cost savings for some municipalities to pay their own policing cost, as opposed to paying through a county levy. He pointed out that municipalities such as Anson, Hindon and Minden, with its school and arena, would be expected to generate more police costs than neighbouring municipalities. But the neighbouring municipalities use the services which are provided in Anson, Hindon and Minden

(more on page 3)

They didn't say "Stop"

Hospital projects continue on track

The Haliburton Highlands Health Services Board will be moving ahead with its capital planning in spite of the visit to the district of the provincial Health Services Restructuring Commission (HSRC).

The commission was in Peterborough last week examining the delivery of health services through the four counties of Haliburton, Victoria, Peterborough and Northumberland. Hospital boards and other stake-holders within the district were invited to make submissions to the board.

The HHHS was represented by Chair Hugh Nichol, past chair Paul Heffer, vice chair David Coulson and executive director Foster Loucks. The board's written submission outlined the extensive planning and work which had brought the HHHS into existence and its over-all vision for the development of the capital projects and an integrated health system for the service area.

During the board's presentation, the members stressed the need for a quick response, especially in regard to the capital projects. "The meter is running and we are proceeding with our architect to complete the drawings so that construction can begin in the spring," Nichol

(more on page 16)

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Accessibility planned for Oxtongue Lake Community Centre

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

Algonquin Highlands has plans to make Oxtongue Lake's Community Centre more accessible.

Currently, Oxtongue Lake's Community Centre has no accessible washroom. With its current space, an accessible washroom is unable to be put in without extensive work.

The current building does not allow an accessible entrance or accessible route for people to travel between the floors.

On Thursday, Dec. 11, Adam Thorn, public works manager for AH presented several options to council for the future Oxtongue Lake Community Centre addition.

AH staff worked with Tulloch Engineering to create three designs for the add-on space. The addition will be built at the rear of the community centre to provide an accessible washroom.

The favoured option of AH staff includes the addition to the rear of the community centre with an accessible washroom, coat room, and emergency exit. A walkway will be built from the parking lot to the rear addition.

Due to the elevation change to the west side of the building, a deck with stairs has been proposed that will provide access to the south side of the community centre.

> ***"We didn't want to take away from the front entrance of the building, to take away from the aesthetics or the history of the building."***
>
> — Adam Thorn, Algonquin Highlands

The entrance and access to the basement would remain the same, with an accessible door being added.

The other two options included an accessible lift that would increase costs from ongoing maintenance. Lifts also require annual servicing and historically, lifts take a while to fix in Algonquin Highlands, noted Thorn.

"We wanted to keep the structure of the building very natural," said Thorn. "We didn't want to take away from the front entrance of the building, to take away from the aesthetics or the history of the building."

Thorn said that there were difficulties trying to decide where the township could include an accessible washroom, as the building is rather small.

Deputy Mayor Jennifer Dailloux asked if removing the pre-existing washrooms downstairs and increasing the space would be beneficial. She also discussed making the ceiling taller. While the plans do not investigate that option, Thorn recommended discussing that in the future.

Dailloux pushed for ouncil to receive feedback from the Oxtongue Lake community. While she uses the community centre herself, she said that it is valuable for community members who need accessible spaces to have their say.

"I am sure we will get a lot of feedback," said Dailloux.

The big topic to discuss is whether or not AH will be footing the bill to get the project rolling, or wait for potential funding.

"I think we need to get a financing plan," said Mayor Liz Danielsen. "I don't think we can assume that we can move forward in 2026. It would be more when funding becomes available."

Danielsen says that one benefit with waiting would be allowing more feedback to come from the community.

After an interruption to council paused the discussion, Thorn has confirmed that the next step is for council to agree on a survey for Oxtongue Lake residents to provide their feedback.

Gull Lake Dam #2 repairs proceeding well

THOMAS SMITH

Journalist

For those who have driven along Highway 35 into Minden, you may have noticed some tarps on the dam in Moore Falls.

Your eyes are not playing tricks on you. Those tarps are protecting the freshly poured concrete while it cures in the cold.

Parks Canada is currently conducting minor concrete repairs to Gull Lake Dam #2, says Karen Feeley, public relations and communications officer for Parks Canada.

In July of this year, Parks Canada indicated that the dam was approaching the end of its service life. No immediate safety concerns were found, but deterioration of the concrete and issues with where the dam sits on the bedrock lead to a poor rating from inspectors.

Parts of the bridge that are receiving repairs include the piers, wingwall, sill, and deck. They will also try to prevent further degradation.

"These targeted repairs are designed to maintain the structure's integrity and extend its service life by approximately 10 years," said Feeley.

In October of this year, Parks Canada determined that the project to repair the dam would bring no harmful effects to the environment. Parks Canada began the project in mid-November.

"This timing allows the repairs to be completed efficiently while maintaining support for other operational priorities across the waterway," said Feeley.

Regular maintenance of dams in our waterways helps ensure public safety, support efficient water management, protect communities located downstream, protect our local ecosystems, and support the long-term operable reliability of our historic structures, says Feeley.

This project will extend the life of the dam, allowing Parks Canada to defer major maintenance and allow for efficient long-term planning into the future of the Trent-Severn Waterway.

Maintenance on Gull Lake Dam #2 is progressing as planned and Parks Canada expects to complete the project before the end of February next year.

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COUNCIL MEETINGS VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON

Council and Closed Session meetings are currently being conducted in-person (Council Chambers, 7 Milne St., Minden) and with electronic participation. The scheduled upcoming meetings are:

January 6, 2026 – Special Council Meeting
January 8, 2026 - Regular Council & Budget Meeting
January 22, 2026 – Regular Council Meeting

Members of the Public are invited to observe Council proceedings by attending in-person or via the live-stream link.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

No ice is safe ice. Venturing onto unsafe ice puts your life and the lives of first responders at risk. Remember, Hypothermia can set in quickly and leave you helpless.

PROGRAM REGISTRATION

- Youth program registration is available online at www.mindenhills.ca/recreation or at the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena. Sign up for floor hockey, soccer, volleyball, multi-sport, basketball or our new Krafty Kids program.
- Fitness class registration is available online at www.mindenhills.ca/recreation or at the SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena Front Desk. Start your new years off right with one of the fitness classes that we have available.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING RE: AMENDMENTS TO THE PROPOSED 2026 MAYORAL BUDGET

Take Notice that the Council of the Township of Minden Hills will hold a Special Meeting of Council on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in Council Chambers located at 7 Milne Street, Minden.
This meeting is scheduled to discuss amendments to the proposed 2026 Mayoral Budget.
Members of the public may access the agenda and budget materials on Friday, January 2nd, 2026.

Dated this 16th day of December, 2025.
Vicki Bull, Clerk
Township of Minden Hills
705-286-1260 ext. 515

UPCOMING HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Municipal Office (7 Milne St.), Fire Office and Public Works Office:
- December 24th 8:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
- CLOSED December 25th – January 1st
- Minden Hills Cultural Centre / Agnes Jamieson Gallery (176 Bobcaygeon Rd.)
- CLOSED December 24th – January 1st

SG Nesbitt Memorial Arena (55 Parkside St.)
- December 24th 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
- December 31st 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- CLOSED December 25th, December 26th, and January 1st.
- Regular operating hours December 27th - December 30th

Waste Disposal Sites
- Regular winter hours
- ALL SITES CLOSED December 25th and January 1st.

Regular operating hours resume on Friday, January 2, 2026. Visit our website for more information.

SAFE WINTER DRIVING

Drive according to weather conditions, posted speed limits are usually too fast. Adjust your speed and give yourself extra travel time. Be visible, low-beam headlights are brighter than daytime running lights, and they will turn on your tail lights.

7 Milne Street, PO Box 359, Minden, ON K0M 2K0 705-286-1260 Toll Free: 1-844-277-1260 Fax 705-286-4917 Township.Minden.Hills Minden Hills@twpmindenhills @Township_MindenHills